

Eastern Rhode Island Conservation District
2490 Main Road – Tiverton, RI 02878 – Phone (401) 816-5667

ERICD Board Meeting
September 10, 2013
7:00 PM

Chairman Emerson Wildes called the meeting to order at 7:10 pm.

Present were: ERICD: Directors: Emerson Wildes, Dick Hart, Suzanne Hourihan (arrived later), Ron Mucci; District Manager: Jessica Blackledge; District Conservationist, NRCS: Melissa Hayden; and Board Candidates: Richard St. Aubin, Cayla Kevlik, Will Walker and Russ Smith

Introductions of Board Candidates and were made and all were thanked for their interest in getting involved with Eastern RI Conservation District.

- I. Minutes: A motion was made to approve the minutes of the July 9, 2013 meeting as presented by Dick Hart and seconded by Ron. Motion passed unanimously.
- II. Financial Report: A written Financial Report was presented. Ron made a motion to accept the Financial Report as presented. Dick seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.
- III. NRCS Report: Melissa Hayden presented a report to the Board. She reported on the status of the Ag Tech agreement with ERICD, NRCS's policy updates on contract termination procedures, among other project updates.
- IV. RI SCC Report: The written report submitted was the same as was submitted for the August ERICD Meeting due to lack of SCC activity. All items that need to be addressed are currently on the ERICD meeting agenda as either Old Business or New Business and will be addressed during this meeting.
- V. Reports:
 - A. District Manager: A written Report was provided. Highlights of the DM Report and Board activity on same are as follows:
 1. Project Updates:
 - a. Geese: Educational workshop will be held this month.
Southern – Kettle Pond Visitor's Center - Saturday, September 14th – 1-3PM
Eastern – RWU, GHH, Rm G01 - Sunday, September 22nd – 1:30 - 3:30pm
Northern – Roger Williams Park Casino – Tuesday, September 24th – 4:30 - 6:30pm
Partnership with RWU is strengthening and may result in volunteers, work-study or internship programs in the future
 - a. Outreach: held a Conservation Open House table at Mount Hope Farm Farmers Market on September 7th from 9-1pm. We spoke with many interested landowners and this workshop will most likely result in at least one NRCS application. ERICD will be tabling at Pardon Gray Day presenting on NRCS programs as part of this agreement.
 - b. FFOS: DM Three FFOS Farm Conservation Plans were completed this month. DM will continue writing FFOS plan as work as available and necessary.
 2. Other Announcements – DM attended and represented ERICD at the Washington County Fair on August 18th, a Geese Project Planning Meeting on August 22nd, an 8 Rod Management Area Site Visit with Ken Ayars, Tyler Young, Cathy Sparks, et al on September 26th and the Eastern District NRCS Outreach Workshop on September 7th at Mt. Hope Farm Farmers Market.

3. Office Updates – Previous Petty Cash Account balance in account: \$147.39; deposit of \$780.00 was made to allow DM to write a check for the same amount for May and June rent; Remaining balance in account is \$147.39
- B. Chair: Emerson reported on the NACD Did You Know email listserve that provides good information to District Directors on District structure, procedures, history, etc. Board asked DM to sign each of them up for this listserve. Emerson reported that he will try to do better at keeping Board Members in touch with each other between meetings.
- C. Directors:
 1. Dick reported on attending a Plant Science Conference in Connecticut last month. Board requested setting up a process by which if they hear of an interesting event, they email it to the DM and she will send it to the other Board Members so all are aware of potential interesting opportunities. Dick also reported on farm insurance.
 2. Suzanne stated she had nothing to report.
 3. Ron reported that he would like to see the District with many Associate Directors that can attend events, meetings, etc. and setting up a method by which one Director might act as a “social planner” for the Members in that they notify the other members of these opportunities.

II. Old Business

- A. Operational Strategy Development to Reduce/Eliminate Expected 2014 Budget Shortfalls: DM reports that she needs to give a report to the SCC at their next meeting on progress in this regard. Board Members did not report progress made on their behalf. Progress includes development of Ag Tech and Outreach Agreements with NRCS which include fringe that will help close the District deficit.
- B. Board Recruitments
 1. Introductions – Introductions were held at the beginning of the meeting.
 2. Invitation Letters & Current Activity – Currently ERICD has five people interested in and actively pursuing becoming a Board Member. DM asked each Board Member to contact three of the remaining 12 Candidates we have yet to hear from. DM will email all contact information to Board Members.
 3. RI Foundation’s Initiative for Nonprofit Excellence’s Board Referral Program – DM has completed all requirements to enroll ERICD in this program. DM will report more as progress occurs.
- C. Funding Opportunities
 1. Fee for Service – DM reported that she has submitted a final draft of the Fee for Services Menu to the SCC. Once the SCC has approved this menu ERICD can make it available to municipalities and the general public. Fee for Services contracts may provide some much needed income for the Eastern District.
 2. NRCS Agreements – DM has continues discussion with our partners at NRCS regarding cooperative agreements. It is understood that NRCS will be funding a new Outreach agreement through the SCC and an Ag Tech agreement directly with the District. However, drafts of these agreements have not yet been submitted. DM will provide updates on this item as progress occurs.
 3. Alex & Ani’s Charmed by Charity Events – No activity to report.
 4. SCC Request for Proposals for Program Development Funding – The SCC reported that they ended the fiscal year with a balance and there was a discussion at the last SCC meeting about making funds available to the Districts for Program Development as was done last year. It was decided that the Districts should present requests for funding for development of specific programs (special projects – NOT operational projects) but that any distribution of funds should be tabled until a Cash Reserve Policy is established by the SCC. DM requested that the Board please provide any ideas for special projects as soon as possible in order to prepare a request to the SCC.

5. Organic Farm Certification – There is some belief that the State may not be interested in continuing to provide their Organic Farm Certification program. Board requested that DM look into this opportunity more.
- D. Lease – Board requested tabling activity on this item until ERICD has a year's rent in savings to ensure District can fulfill contractual obligations as state in the proposed lease.
- E. 8 Rod Management Plan – As reported last month, the Management Plan for 8 Rod is currently the default plan that was originally developed with ERICD. The DM attended a site visit with Ken Ayars, Cathy Sparks, Tyler Young, et al. at 8 Rod on August 26th. Some of the opportunities for the District that were revealed by this site visit include:
 - Assisting in the development of a Management Plan that supports both the Farmer's goals and DEM F&W objectives by working closely with DEM and the farmer.
 - Manage some small projects for DEM F&W (brush removal, for example)The DM requested that the Board discuss if these roles might be something the ERICD Board would like to consider. Discussion was held on how Board could assist and many questions still remain. The ERICD Board directed DM to continue conversations with DEM partners to develop a more detailed description of what this partnership/agreement would entail.
- F. Other

III. New Business

- A. NRCS Staff Presentations on NRCS Programs – Ron suggested that NRCS might use their time at the ERICD meetings to provide a presentation on NRCS programs, trainings, case studies, practices, etc. the Board might benefit learning about. Melissa is willing, though she suggested that the Board Meetings might not be the best forum for this sort of presentation. This item will be discussed in future meetings and will remain on the agenda.
- B. SCC Appointments
 1. SCC Legislative Subcommittee – The SCC has asked each District to appoint a Board Member to a subcommittee to develop a list of changes to the enabling legislation that the Districts would like to see made (increase in number of Board seats, etc.). The DM requested that the ERICD Board select someone to sit on this subcommittee and notify Ramona LeBlanc as soon as a member is selected. Emerson volunteered to sit on the SCC Legislative Subcommittee.
 2. Farm Forest & Open Space Subcommittee – The SCC FFOS Subcommittee's appointed seats consist of three tax assessors and two members of the public. One of the two public seats must be filled with someone enrolled with a Forest Designation in FFOS and one must be a member of a Land Trust. All seats are up for appointment and/or reappointment. DM asked that the Board send any suggestions for candidates or nominees to Ramona LeBlanc.
- C. FFOS Fee Structure Feedback – A discussion of the current FFOS Farm Plan fee structure was held at the last SCC meeting. The estimated average number of hours for plans far exceeds what had been anticipated. As a result the fees being charged do not adequately compensate the planners. Ideas of how to determine a more realistic fee would be welcomed. DM asked that Board Members send any ideas to Ramona LeBlanc as soon as possible.
- D. RI Conservation Districts Board Retreat – The SCC has scheduled a SCC/CD Board Retreat at the South Kingstown Land Trust Barn on October 19, 2013. The plan is for the Districts to meet separately in the morning and all three Boards and the SCC meeting together in the afternoon. The SCC has informed the DM that they have not heard from any of the ERICD Board Members regarding their intent to attend the Retreat. DM reminded the Board that this is a mandatory meeting and directed the Board to RSVP for this event as soon as possible. DM also reminded the Board that they need to set an agenda for the morning session of the Retreat.
- E. Farmland Advisors Conference – Last December the ERICD DM was one of 80 participants selected from a large pool of qualified applicants from New York and New England (and one

of only two selected from RI) to participate in the Farmland Advisors Program, a training program on farm transfer and farmland access options designed for professionals working with farmers and landowners. Thus far, the DM has participated in 3 webinars. The Program also requires attendance at the Farmland Advisors Conference to be held in Albany, NY on Monday and Tuesday, November 18-19, 2013. The DM has been successful in getting the Travel and Room & Board costs for the event covered via a scholarship from the organizing parties. Similarly, the SCC has approved covering the cost of the DM's time to attend the Conference as well.

F. Other – None

Meeting adjourned at 9:30pm

Next Meeting: October 8, 2013 at 7:00pm